

Stampless Covers from Rochester

By ROBERT A. HUTCHINSON

IN the early years of the United States postal system, postmasters were permitted to prepare the markings used to identify their towns or cities and to rate the postage to be paid on letters passing through their offices.

Usually the first town markings were straight line cancels made with type of various sorts taken from printer's cases. These soon gave way to other cancel designs, chief among which were the different sized ovals, favorites among stampless cover collectors for many years.

One of the post offices using this oval design for about sixteen years was Rochester, New York, in which postal markings I have been specializing for many decades. At this time such discussion would be most appropriate inasmuch as the annual ROPEX show of the Rochester Philatelic Association will be held November 12 to 14th, 1976.

Nathaniel Rochester and associates from Maryland purchased 300 acres at the Upper Falls of the Genesee River in 1802, but did not lay out the

property for settlement until 1812, the same year that Francis and Matthew Brown plotted about 200 acres adjoining the Rochester Tract. But the war with Great Britain, including Canada, broke out at that time and seriously retarded development of the area. Among the settlers in 1812 was the Rev. Abelard Reynolds, who became the first postmaster of Rochester when the office was opened November 19, 1812.

My first postal marking from Rochester is a straight line cancel dated September 4, 1815, (Fig. 1) on folded letter from John Harford, whose father Charles Harford built a small mill in 1807 at the Genesee falls. The first mill erected after that by the notorious Tory, Ebenezer Allen, in 1788 or 1790, according to the Historical and Statistical Gazetteer of New York State, published by R.P. Smith in Syracuse in 1860. The Allen property had been sold to the Pulteney Estate when Allen moved to Canada, and his mill "went to decay." Harford applied to the Arch McIntyre, Comptroller of N.Y. State at Albany, for a loan on his property which "I bought from my father, and his title is standing above twenty years without dispute." This cover is probably the earliest from Rochester and bears the War of 1812 postage rate of 25½ cents from Rochester to Albany. Postal receipts from Rochester in Postmaster Reynolds' report

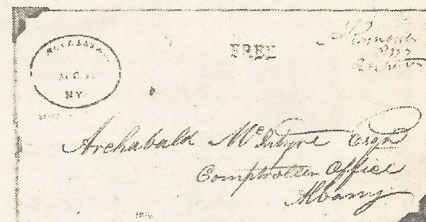


Fig. 2

to Washington totaled \$3.46 to April 1, 1813.

The first oval markings used by Postmaster Reynolds appeared in 1816. The first is a single lined marking 33-27 cancelled August 24th on folded letter (Fig. 2) to the Comptroller in Albany inquiring as to the amount of taxes which were owing on property lying along the Genesee River in the County of Ontario consisting of about 100 acres which the Postmaster had purchased shortly before. The letter carries a notation by the Comptroller that taxes in the amount of \$7.59 were due, and Postmaster Reynolds' second letter (Fig. 3) written November

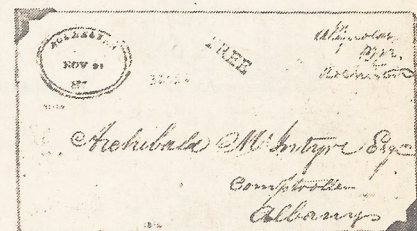


Fig. 3

10th and cancelled with a double lined oval marking 32-26, to the Comptroller states "I herein transmit to you seven dollars and sixty-two cents as you mentioned for the taxes on lot No. 65." Both letters carry

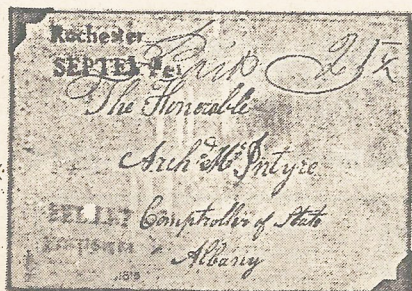


Fig. 1

the FREE marking and A. Reynolds PM Rochester manuscript notations; the ink used is dark green.

Two folded letters dated November 19, 1816; and January 27, 1817, continue with the double oval marking in green, the first from Rev. Comfort Williams to Rev. Calvin Chapin in Rocky Hill, Conn., with PAID in green and manuscript 18¾ rate, and the second from A.

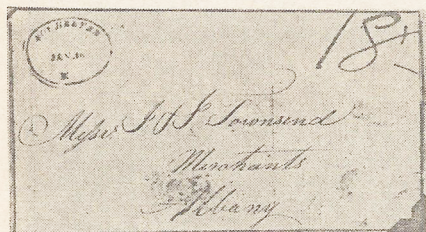


Fig. 3a

and C. (Fig. 3a) Hanford to Messrs. J. and J. Townsend, Merchants, Albany, N.Y. an unpaid letter with 18¾ manuscript rate. The Rev. Mr. Williams describes the founding of "six flourishing churches within six months" including Murray, Sweden, Gains, and East Poultney: "in this western wilderness," and asks for the assignment of two more missionaries to aid him. The Hanfords ask an extension of credit from the Albany creditors, stating "Money is scarce, we are taking in property this winter and we must make money out of it. Please be as patient as possible."

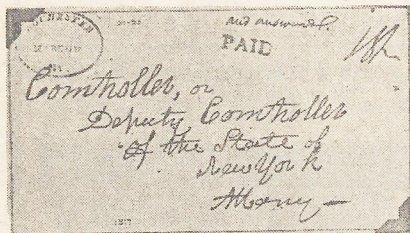


Fig. 4

On March 18, 1817 a different marking was in use, a single lined oval, 30x23, in green, (Fig. 4) on folded letter from H.K. Bender to the Comptroller in Albany with PAID in green and manuscript 18¾. This cancel is similar to Figure 3 without the outer line of the

oval and the lettering seem to be the same along with the spacing of NY at the bottom of the oval.

Between April 1817 and June 1818, an oval 30x23, was used with Rochester lined in at the top of the oval, the markings struck in blue up to July 1817 when red ink was used throughout the rest of the series of

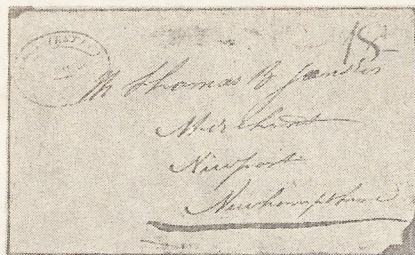


Fig. 5

ovals. This marking (Fig. 5) in green appears on letters of April 9 and April 25; the former with PAID and 18¾ manuscript rate to Albany and the latter an unpaid 18¾ rated letter in manuscript to Newport, N.H.

Red ink was used July 21, 1817, on letter to the Comptroller in Albany on the same marking, but on September 27, 1817, a slightly smaller type (Fig. 5a) was used in the Rochester label and the N.Y. at the bot-

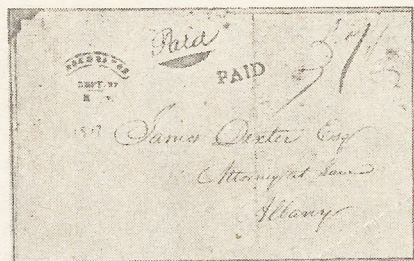


Fig. 5a

tom of the oval was moved up under the date and the letters spaced wider apart. However, in May 1818 the older marking was back in use with the N.Y. at the bottom of the oval again though spaced slightly wider than the early 1817 markings.

On January 9, 1819 a different marking appeared, the oval 30x23 about the same size but Rochester used without the inner line, the date in

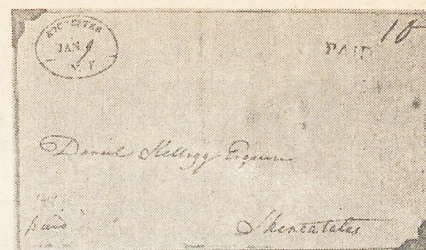


Fig. 5b

large letters and N.Y. in italics and wider at the bottom of the oval. This cancel on a PAID letter, manuscript 10, to Skeneateles, N.Y. (Fig. 5b).

Monroe County was formed February 23, 1821 from Ontario and Genesee counties, but the village of Rochester was taken from towns of Brighton and Gates and incorporated under the name of **Rochesterville** March 21, 1817. However, the Rochester post office did not change to Rochesterville until well after that date and my first marking under that name is dated April 20, 1820, with a dotted oval 30x22 as illustrated

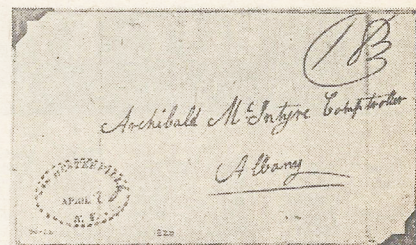


Fig. 6

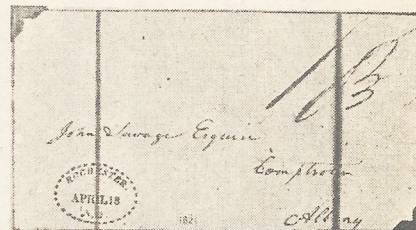


Fig. 7

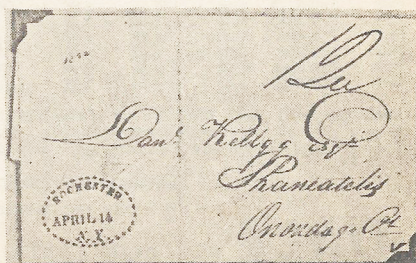


Fig. 7a

528 in Fig. 6. This marking was used about a year, for on April 18, 1821, Fig. 7 shows the same dotted oval with the Rochester spelling and a larger date and N.Y. in capital italics at the bottom. (7a) However, the village of Rochesterville did not officially change its name back to Rochester until April 12, 1822.

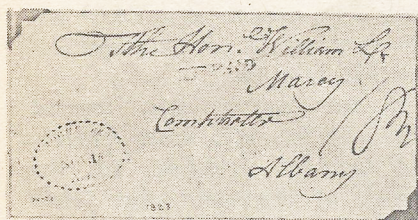


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

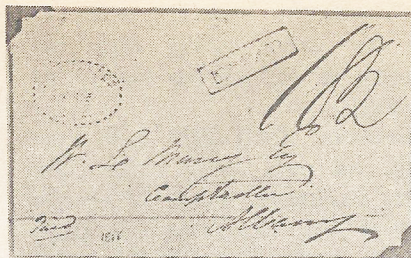


Fig. 9a

The Rochester dotted oval continued in use through 1824 with dates in various sizes and positions in the middle of the oval; "N.Y." in various types and positions at the bottom of the oval. A new PAID marking with a pointing finger hand appears on a letter dated November 16, 1823, to the Hon. William L. Marcy, Comptroller, at Albany as seen in Fig. 8. This PAID marking was superceded in 1824 by a boxed Hand and PAID as shown in Fig. 9 and 9a.

A complete change in markings occurred in 1825, when on 18th July a solid oval 33x24 was used with Rochester in italics caps and the T in much larger

caps, the date with a solid line underneath across the oval and oval and New York spelled out at the bottom of the oval in Fig. 10. On September 17, 1825, an

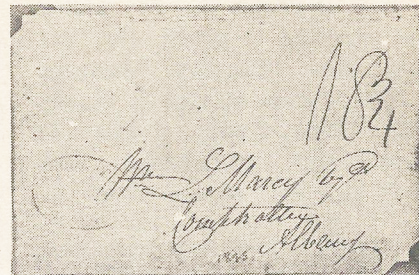


Fig. 10

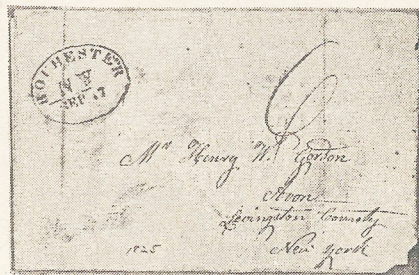


Fig. 11

entirely different marking was used, this oval being 32x25

with Rochester in large caps and N.Y. in larger solid caps above the date with the line between N.Y. and the date and a space at the bottom of the oval, in Fig. 11. This letter was sent with manuscript 6 rate to Avon, N.Y.



Fig. 12

Another complete change is shown on a letter dated February 7, 1826 to Scottsville with an oval 32x24 with ROCHESTER in caps at top and the date placed above the N.Y. in caps well above the bottom of the oval in Fig. 12. The rate 6 is in manuscript.

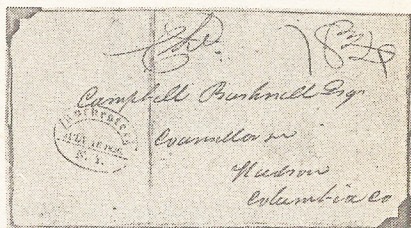


Fig. 13

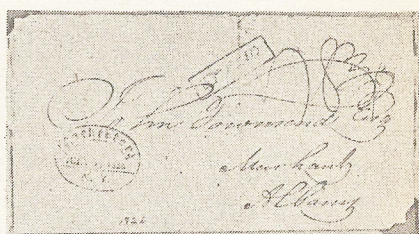


Fig. 14

The first year date (1826 used in ovals appears on the July 16 marking on letter to Hudson, N. Y., with a new cancellation having Rochester in upper and lower type again used in lines at the top of the oval, the date being above a line across the oval, and N.Y. in caps at bottom of the marking. There is a charge rating of 18¾ (Fig. 13). A second letter to Albany on July 19 has the familiar boxed hand and PAID

mark with 18¾ in manuscript. (Fig. 14). A September 21 marking shows no "year" on letter to the Comptroller in Albany in Fig. 15.

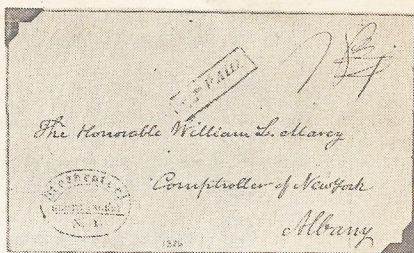


Fig. 15

In 1828 we have three letters carrying an entirely different oval marking, though the same size 32x24. ROCHESTER is in caps across the top with a large N.Y. in the center above the date; about two-thirds down the oval and nothing at the bottom of the marking



Fig. 16

(Fig. 16). On letters to New York and Albany a new boxed small hand and PAID in caps appears. Later in the year, in November three letters show the same ROCHESTER at the top of the oval but the N.Y. in smaller caps removed to the bottom of the marking and the date in caps between the two as is usual. A new PAID in double lined caps is shown in box without the customary hand on two of the letters to Utica and Holley, N.Y., but without a PAID marking on collect letter 12 to Sangersfield, N.Y. (Fig. 17a, b, c).

On January 28, 1829 the same town marking is used with a solid PAID in a boxed mark on letter to Albany. A different cancellation with Rochester in smaller caps at the top of the oval, the date in center between two lines stretching across the oval and N.Y. in small caps at

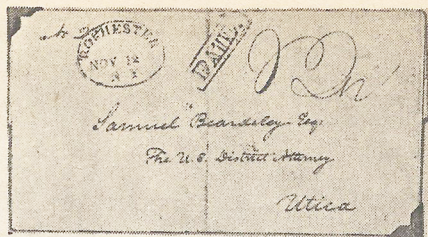


Fig. 17a

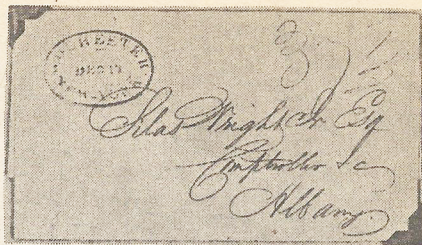


Fig. 19



Fig. 17b

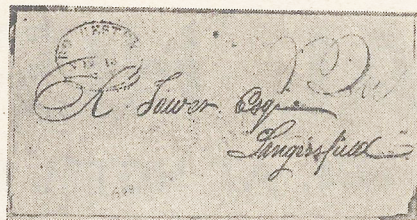


Fig. 17c

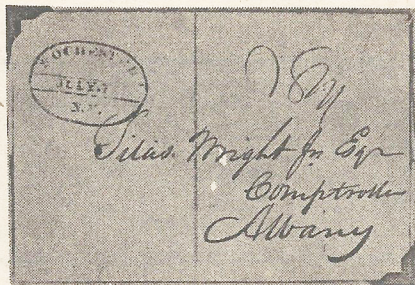


Fig. 18

the bottom is shown in Fig. 18 on letter to Albany, on July 7. This oval is larger being 35x24.

My last oval is on letter from the Bank of Rochester to Silas Wright, Comptroller in Albany, reporting tolls from the Erie Canal for November, 1929.

The marking is the same as the last one but has ROCHESTER in a double oval at top and NEW-YORK in caps at the bottom with the date, Dec. 13 in the middle. Fig. 19. The enclosure of the tolls list brought on a double rate of 37½ cents for postage.

Winners at Kansas City MIDAPHIL

THE Kansas City Fifth Annual Mid-America Philatelic Exhibition (MIDAPHIL '76) held 24-26 September in the Plaza Inn Exhibition Hall brought two hundred and four frames of exhibits, thirty-three nationwide dealers, and U.S. and U.N. Postal stations to attract large crowds each day.

The Grand Award went to Tom Elsen for his "United States Ocean Mail," the Reserve Grand Award to Tom Alexander for his "Missouri During the Civil War." Gold awards were given to Charles W. Thurston, Henry Hensel, David T. Beals III, William H. Bauer, Frank Bachenhelmer, and to Ashley Willhite.

Silver awards to Edwin Hope, Carl W. Thorsell, Jr., Earl Merriman, Charles Tuteur, William K. McDaniel, David R. Lucas, Francis J. Crown, Jr., S.H. Leven, Paul A. Larsen, Richard J. Bennink, Julius Kaposta, Gary W. Hall, and Jerry Watron.

Bronze awards were given to Robert Homsher, Vernon McCandish, Robert J. Urdang, Judith E. Varner, Francis J. Crown, Jr., Wesley Goldberg, Mark Isaacs, Robert B. Smith, Jack Pullin, Thomas B. Candelent, and Everett F. Wheeler.

Special awards as follow: Marcus White Trophy - Edwin Hope; United Nations - Earl Merriman; SPA - Henry Hensel; AAMS - Julius Kaposta; and UPSS 1st Certificate to - Thomas B. Candelent.

Earl Merriman